Q U A N T A

1984 to 2009

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SILVER JUBILEE YEAR

Volume 26. Issue 4
Aug/Sept 2009

Information on the Association

Membership of QUANTA, the independent QL user group, is by annual subscription. The Membership Secretary can supply full details. Copies of the association's constitution & annual accounts are available from the Secretary. There is an extensive software library. There are active national subgroups. Details are given in the Member's Guide and in this magazine.

QUANTA Committee - 2009/2010

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QUANTA Magazine

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COPY DATE for OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2009 ISSUE is:

5TH OCTOBER 2009

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Copy on Microdrive or Floppy Disk or CD to be accompanied by hard copy printout.
Copy by Email to - editor@quanta.org.uk

EDITORIAL   John Gilpin

Half way through the year and I am getting an encouraging buzz from my communications with the rest of the QUANTA Committee. We do seem to have settled down to the tasks we have set ourselves (or those set by the previous committee!)

In particular, progress has been made in deciding which of two recommended Content Management Systems (CMSs) to use for the New QUANTA Web Site. - The two systems were chosen by Dan Abbott - Webmaster - who chose Joomla and Keith Dunbar - Web Administrator - who chose Typo3. Both Dan and Keith have worked very hard to set up test sites for the rest of the committee to familiarise themselves with and for us to choose whichever system we thought was easier to use and is more user friendly etc. Following meetings with a representative of Continum - our Web space host - where they expressed their willingness to provide the required hosting facilities,- we have decided to go with Typo3 and moves are now being made to implement that onto the site. We are now working on content and layout and we hope to announce our re-launch in the near future.

The Editor of "the other" magazine (I refuse to look upon them as "competition" and they are not closely enough related to be a "sister" publication) QLToday spent a lot of time making remarks about QUANTA and this Magazine which I would like to address.

Before I do so, I would like to say how pleased I am to see that QLToday is still in publication despite thoughts that it was coming to the end of its life - well done and many thanks to the editorial team for overcoming your various difficulties during the last volume.

Geoff has remarked on our early difficulties last year brought about by the illness of our newly appointed Magazine Editor who was unable to give us the service that he genuinely offered. We all hope that Tony is continuing to recover from his medical problems and,

who knows, may be able to help us in the future. This meant that we had to revert to our "temporary" staffing and I admit that a couple of issues were below par but there was never any suggestion that QUANTA had closed down. I strongly feel that we have learnt a lot from this episode and still maintain that the QUANTA Magazine is a "flourishing publication" which could get even better with a little more man-power from a dedicated Magazine Editor.

The question of keeping the Web Site up to date has also been addressed with the appointment of Keith Dunbar as Web Administrator and the proposed introduction of the CMS referred to above. We hope that these moves will improve not only the timely maintenance of the site but also the content being continually updated to make it into an interesting and vibrant means of communication for both our members and the public at large.

It now only remains for the QUANTA Membership to keep us informed of their views and requirements expected from the Association and with this in mind, I shall be continuing with the "Points of View" section in this Magazine. Lets us have your comments. Submissions to:-

editor@quanta.org.uk

or by post - details inside the front cover.

It may not have gone unnoticed that the current QUANTA Committee all live well "north of Watford". This probably comes about by the members of the old committee who also live "up north" being able to exert some pressure on our local members to support QUANTA in its need to refresh the committee following the necessary retirement of our Chairman and the illness of our Magazine editor. What happened to nominations from the rest of the membership? If, like me, you are not happy with this situation and you feel that members in other parts of the country (and overseas!!) would be better supported with a wider spread (geographically) committee, then make sure that you use the Nomination forms which will be sent out with the next issue of QUANTA Magazine in preparation for the AGM 2010. It's in your hands!!

QUANTA COMMITTEE PRÉCIS   Sarah Gilpin

The minutes of the meeting held on July 11th and the subsequent email discussion and decisions have been written by me as Alison was unable to attend the meeting.

The minutes from the AGM were agreed by the Committee for approval at the 2010 Annual General Meeting.

The treasurer provided a financial report on the 25th Annual General Meeting and workshop weekend held at Allesley in April. A budget had been agreed of £3500.00 and the costs, including the Silver Jubilee issue of the QUANTA Magazine, came under budget by approximately £800.00. There may be a small additional expense from committee member's expenses which have not yet been claimed.

It has been suggested that the AGM for 2010 should be held in the Midlands and the Committee are currently looking for a suitable venue such as a community hall or Scout headquarters in the area. If any member can recommend such a venue please contact the Chairman.

Dan Abbott and Keith Dunbar gave presentations of the Joomla and Typo3 CMS systems currently under review. Test sites for each system have been provided by Continum, our Web site host provider. Committee members have been requested to try both systems and report their preference in two weeks.

Email minutes have been provided regarding the trial usage of the two CMS systems and the Committee members have chosen Typo3. The committee members are now to make suggestions as to the layout of the new Web site and the provision of a restricted member's only section.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES   Sarah Gilpin

Welcome to all our members and I hope that everyone is enjoying the summer weather. In our household gardening and a decking project at my Father's have reduced the hours we spend in front of a computer, whether the PC or the QL.

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The Committee held a meeting on July 11th to discuss in more detail the proposed CMS systems recommended for the QUANTA Web site. Two systems had been put forward; Joomla and Typo3.

A representative of Continum, our web server hosts, was present to confirm whether Continum could provide the increased service that we will require. At the time of the meeting Continum had provided a test page for Typo3 and were prepared to provide a similar page for Joomla to enable the members of the Committee to try both systems and choose their preferred system.

During the meeting Dan Abbott gave a presentation of Joomla and Keith Dunbar gave one of Typo3. Either system will provide a facility to enable both sub-groups and traders to manage their own relevant sections on the Web site. All Committee members will be able to update information such as news, new programmes etc. It was decided that the members other than Dan and Keith should take a couple of weeks to familiarise themselves with both sites and make a choice. It has now been confirmed that the system QUANTA will use is Typo3.

The Committees next step is to make suggestions for the pages required on the Web site. If any members have any points of view on this, please contact me or Alison Southern and they will be taken into consideration. After all, the Web site is for all members. It is envisaged that there will be some pages restricted to members only.

Also at that meeting John Gilpin presented an up to date account for the 25th celebrations. A budget of £3500.00 had been allocated for QL is 25 weekend and no budget had been allocated for the Silver Jubilee QUANTA magazine. The total expenditure as at 11th July 2009 was £2773.05 including the Silver Jubilee magazine, but there were outstanding expense claims due from two committee members. I would like to thank John Mason and John Gilpin for their efforts to keep the expenses to QUANTA so far below budget, whilst providing an excellent weekend.

Next years AGM will be held once more in the Midlands as this makes for less travel for everyone. The exact date has not yet been fixed but will be either 10th/11th or 17th/18th April 2010, depending on the date of Easter.

There is now unlikely to be an autumn workshop this year as the Committee has received no offers to host such an event in a suitable venue.

QL Today Subscription

We are approaching Volume 14 of QL Today. J-M-S is happy to continue, and Bruce Nicholls of Quo Vadis Design will take care of the UK delivery. You can subscribe by using this form (or a copy of it), or subscribe online via www.QLToday.com (the form can be downloaded), by email, letter, fax etc. ... we are very flexible! The first issue of Volume is being prepared already and will be ready for you middle of September ... the cover can be seen on the other sheet!!

☐ I hereby subscribe to QL *Today* for 4 issues of Volume 14. **The total price for all four issues is as follows,** including postage and packing (depending on destination and time of renewal ... early renewals get a discount!)

Destination	price
Germany, Netherlands & United Kingdom	**EUR 29.90**
Rest of Europe	**EUR 31.90**
Rest of World (airmail)	**EUR 42.90**

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Please fill in and send to Jochen Merz Software, Kaiser-Wilh-Str. 302, 47169 Duisburg, Germany. or Fax to 149 203 501517 or scan & Email to SMSQ@J M S.com

Back-issues of all Volumes of QL Today are also available. If you search for a specific issue, please let us know. If we do not have it, we will re-print it for you. If you want more back-issues, the per-issue price goes down as the postage plays a major part in the pricing. Even German back-issues are still available (from the first years of QL Today).

QUANTA NEWS   Dilwyn Jones

Change of address

Please note the new address for Dilwyn Jones as of 14th August 2009:

<div align="center">

Dilwyn Jones
22 Erw Las
Coetmor New Road
Bethesda
Gwynedd
LL57 3NN

</div>

Email: dilwyn@evans1511.fsnet.co.uk or jones@dilwyn.me.uk

Existing email addresses will all remain active for now at least and my QUANTA email addresses are unaffected, as is my web site address of

<div align="center">

www.dilwyn.me.uk

</div>

Q-Pass

A new program for storing all those logins and passwords securely in an encrypted and password protected database is now available from my web site. Q-Pass lets you enter several user-defined categories of passwords (e.g. Home, Work, Browsing etc) and a couple of lines of notes. As well as being stored in an encrypted database, the program can print out a list of all passwords and the other details, so that you can keep a paper backup under lock and key in a safe place.

Q-Pass records the date the password was entered and modified. You can also set reminders for passwords which need to be renewed regularly, e.g. weekly or monthly.

Passwords can if required be copied to the Scrap system or Stuffer Buffer. If QPC2 is used, the QPC_SYNCSCRAP command allows the Scrap content to be copied to the Windows clipboard for subsequent pasting into browsers or other programs requiring passwords to be entered (although you should be aware that the password would also be available to other Windows programs unless the clipboard is cleared, an obvious security risk).

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Q-Pass offers a simple to use method of recording the endless passwords we need for everyday life nowadays in a reasonably secure yet easy to use system, which autosaves the database every time it's updated and also maintains a "_bak" backup file which can be loaded should a mishap occur with the main database file.

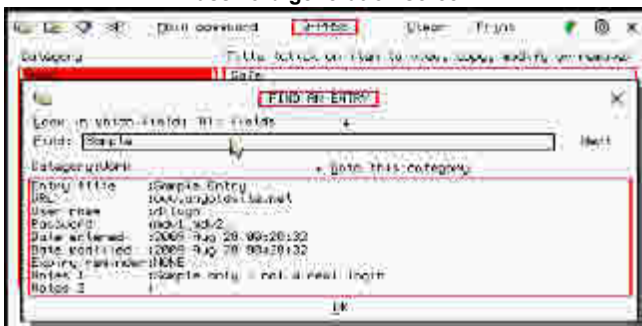The Q-Pass software is available to download from

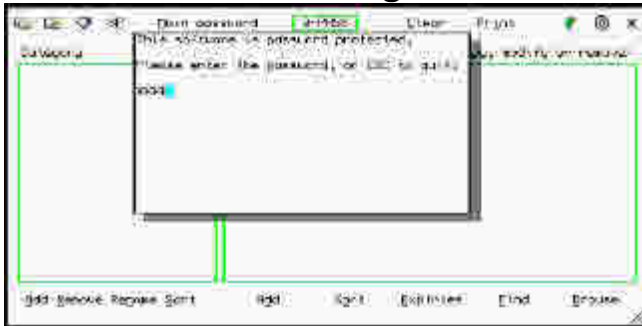http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/database/index.html
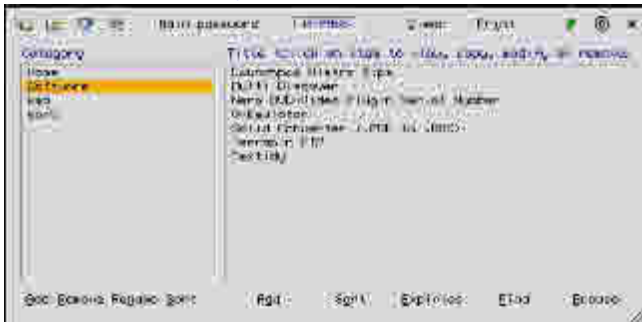
Home screen

Password generation screen

The FIND screen

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Entering password for protected database.

New GD2 Sprite Editor Launched

Duncan Neithercut has sent me a new GD2 sprite editor to make available on my web site.

It is an icon/sprite editor to create sprites in mode 64 or mode 4 or to save them as .bmp for use in Wolfgang Lenerz program. Existing sprites in a variety of modes (including mode 32 QXL/QPC and mode 33 Q40/Q60) can be loaded and edited. Or sprites can be created from scratch. The editor has a number of novel features including an independently editable alpha channel, undo function and a simple merge to combine 2 sprites of the same size, and other features such as home directory and colour theme awareness.

It is in an alpha/beta status but is fully usable, but there may still be bugs due to the complexity of the program, that require additional users to identify. In other words, try it and let Duncan know of any problems you find!

Available to download free (92 KB) from the Sprites page on my web site:

http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/database/index.html
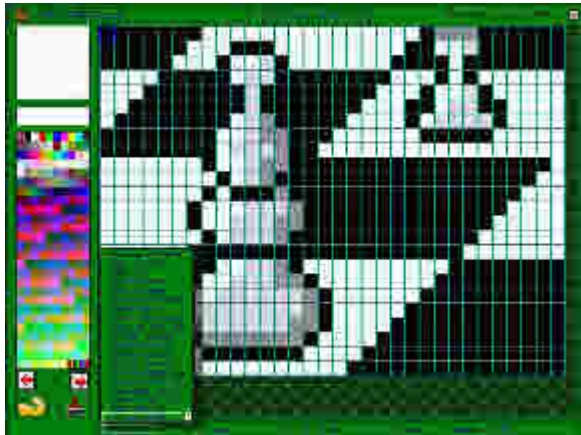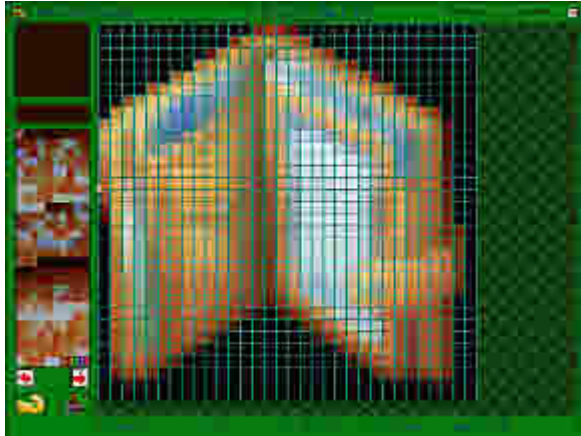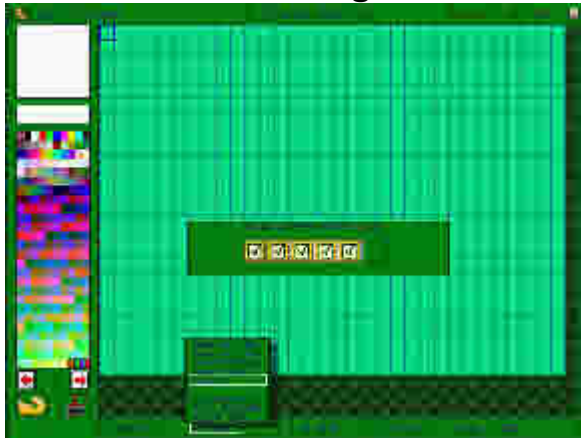
Some sample screens from Edi

QL Hackers Journal at RWAP

Rich Mellor writes:

With geocities due to close later this year, I have, with the agreement of Tim Swenson, now added the QL Hacker's Journal to my RWAP Adventures web site - see

http://www.rwapadventures.com/qhj.html

George Gwilt updates

Since 27th June 2009 there are seven new updates of programs to be found on my site

href="http://web.ukonline.co.uk/george.gwilt/

About half of these concern the use of IO_EDLIN to edit a line. This minor change adds a test of buffer overflow.

Program Update

GWASS EDLIN and a corrected assembly of MOVEC

NET_PEEK EDLIN (In the files GWPK)

GWDISS EDLIN (In the files GWPK)

DISP EDLIN

EasyPEasy Slightly better method of producing window working definitions

SETW Allows much more overlap of information windows (due to remarks by Bob Spelten)

TurboPTR A fault in TPTR_BAS corrected plus several small improvements.

QL & Mac Are 25 in Switzerland

U rs König writes:

After some weeks if not months of evaluation and talks of what's next in the QL is 25 storyline I'm very happy to announce that an international "QL & Mac are 25" event will be hosted in Lucerne, Switzerland on Sat/Sun Oct 31-Nov 1, 2009.

It will be hosted in a very special place, the brand new Conference Centre, in the famous Verkehrshaus (Swiss Transport Museum).

For first details please visit the web-page:

http://www.qlvsjaguar.homepage.bluewin.ch/QL_and_Mac_are_25_
international_event.html

Even if those historical and recent QL and ICT themes - the event will be much more than ancient/retro - are maybe not enough motivation for some to attend think about a few days "Indian summer" holidays in the beautiful heart of Switzerland.

Feedback and input is very much appreciated.

BTW: We are looking for partners and speakers.

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Part of Urs König's "QL & Mac are 25" web page

Retro Gaming magazine article

R ich Mellor writes:

A new article on the Sinclair QL written by Martyn Carroll appears in Retro Gamer magazine, which went on sale on 16th July 2009.

Digital C freeware

W ith permission from author Gerry Jackson, I have been able to place a copy of Digital C compiler onto my web site's Languages page at

www.dilwyn.me.uk/language/index.html .

This is the C compiler which used to be sold by QL software house DP Ltd - now that marketing rights have lapsed, the other gave me permission to make it freely available on a freeware basis (may be distributed on a non-profit basis, author retains copyright).

Even better news is that Gerry Jackson still has copies of the sources of this package, so is currently working to see if he can update the compiler!

Ready for you middle of September!
Please use subscription form
somewhere in this issue!

QL Today

Volume 14
Issue 1
Sept. - Nov.
2009

ISSN 1432-5454

The Magazine about QL, QDOS,
Sinclair Computers, SMSQ...

Over 11 pages
in this issue
- and there's
more to come!

QL

Firmware

Bugs

Myths

All the details about what happened 25
years ago at Sinclair - revealed by
Tony Tebby! Extremely interesting!
Hair-raising! Frustrating! Amazing!

Well, a bit of everything!
Once you start reading, you can't stop!

Maths Toolkit English Manual

With thanks to Derek Stewart who fed the original manual through a translation system, Helmut Aigner's QL Maths Toolkit (available on the Toolkits page on my web site at

http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/tk/index.html

now has an English manual as well as the original German one. I'd still like to hear from anyone willing to tidy up and correct the English manual - inevitably it will need a bit of work after the machine translation.

SQLUG Newsletter

John Sadler has sent me a reminder that the Scottish QL User Group (SQLUG) still publish their regular newsletters. It will tell you what is happening in SQLUG and there is part of an article each month. A £4.00 Subscription will get you all this years issues.

Sample SQLUG newsletter.

And Finally...

Now, you may have felt back in the first half of 1984 that Sinclair weren't always completely transparent with prospective buyers about delivery dates, but here's one completely transparent QL item which turned up on eBay in August.

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Rich Mellor, who brought this eBay sale to our attention, thinks it was produced for promotional material, to show the inner workings of the microdrive cartridges. Rich said he didn't remember a picture of these, just hand drawn diagrams.

The item apparently sold for a sum *much* higher than the normal black microdrive cartridges sell for.

It just goes to show that even after 25 years of QLing, surprises can still turn up!

POINTS OF VIEW   Duncan Neithercut

Size matters and so does quality.

In response to an editorial in this magazine I wrote an article which attempted to envision a likely future for QUANTA based on an analysis of what had happened during the past 10 or so years. At the heart of my vision was recognition of how the Internet had supported the survival of QUANTA and the QL scene. As a result I concluded that the viable future was a largely Internet future for QUANTA. That article has generated a number of responses and interpretations here in QUANTA and also in QLToday.

One response that motivates me to write again is that expressed by the QUANTA Committee in QLToday Volume 13 issue 4 June to August 2009.

I wish to constructively disagree with the committee regarding their constructive comment on my previous statement that the email .pdf QUANTA magazine fails to make any advantage out of the fact that it is in electronic format.

I note that both the committee and the editor of QLToday state that the uptake of the electronic format has been low in general, low in the UK but significantly proportionally amongst overseas subscribers. This phenomenon is probably correctly attributed by the committee to the fact that the email subscription cost for overseas subscribers is reduced if they take the magazine in an email format. My additional guess is that delivery may also be quicker. This I suggest is an example of standard human behaviour where uptake of something new occurs most rapidly where it is clearly advantageous. Which takes me back to the point I made in my original article and I quote:

"the email distributed .pdf magazine is a doppelganger for the paper magazine! None of the opportunities of electronic publishing have been used, not even colour."

Hence the low uptake in the UK. Here there is little advantage. The main reason for acceptance of an email magazine is possibly simply altruism on the part of the subscriber.

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If the electronic quanta magazine offered substantial advantages over the paper format then I strongly suggest its uptake in general would be markedly greater. For example colour would be nice and high resolution photos of meetings and screen shots would be nice. Some additional content would be especially good. I hear the committee sigh. Does he not realise it is hard to fill the magazine as it is? Does he not understand how much thought the committee has already given this?

Actually I do but I suggest that QUANTA is sitting on a significant amount of copy that could be used with minimal effort. For example from the archives of the magazine, such as software reviews, listings from the library, or documents from the Internet none of which should give the magazine editor much trouble to acquire.

Having suggested some solutions for the enhanced content problem I will now attempt to resolve the compromise between quality and size issue that has stumped editors of QUANTA. The size issue as I understand it is a result of email traffic restrictions. The solution is not to email the magazine out. Email subscribers when the latest magazine is published. Publish the magazine on the QUANTA web site. In the alert email send a password which is specific to that issue of the magazine. Zip with password protection the .pdf magazine, or otherwise password protect it. Now its up to the subscriber to download the magazine and enjoy the enhanced and superior content. Who wants a paper copy now. Well I suppose those without a broadband connection, but the Editor has now created an incentive for those who can, to move to the electronic magazine with cost enhancements for QUANTA, which is all of us. And for goodness sake if subscribers want a printed version to carry around it's easy enough to print from a .pdf for a personal paper copy. And finally if people have PCs that cannot easily download files of a few megabytes size I do wonder how do you keep windows and your fire wall and virus checker up to date?

Well dear committee and fellow subscribers what about it?

What is on the Internet for the QL enthusiast?

Much has been said about the importance of the Internet to the QL. This article is intended therefore to encourage those QUANTA members who are not yet Internet

connected to have a go. And for those who are already Internet connected to suggest some QL places they may not have been before on the internet.

To cover old ground. There is QUANTA's web site. Whatever QUANTA's critics think of it it's definitely not bad at all compared to some commercial Internet sites. There are also and not in any hierarchical order Dilwyn Jones and Thierry Godefroy's mega freeware software repositories. There are pages dedicated to QL colour systems from Bob Spelten. Pages dedicated to George Gwilt and Turbo programs. The QPC2 emulator and its associated programmes site by Marcel Kilgus. The home site of the most advanced QL hardware, the Q60 hardware. The commercial sites from JMS Software, RWAP software and the Quo Vadis Design site. The web addresses of these sites are appended at the end of this article.

Beyond these and definitely off the main QL Internet piste there are many other interesting QL hardware and software web sites. Firstly there is eBay. Tonight, 23rd July 2009, on eBay for sale there are 4 used black box QLs. Each week there is usually at least one black box QL system for sale with prices ranging from £16-00, which the cheapest I have seen, to £150 depending on condition and extras. There is still a definite interest in the acquisition of original QLs. If anyone needs the cash and has a spare QL there is real money for it on eBay. Also if individuals are still interested in buying basic QLs on eBay perhaps QUANTA should be selling membership there. After all there are usually one or two traders selling replacement QL keyboard membranes there, including RWAP.

On the software front tonight, for sale is PSION chess, QL SuperMonitor, QL Peintre, QL Cartridge Doctor, The Lost Kingdom of ZKUL, The dark side of the moon text adventure, Scrabble, the ICE ROM and cartridge, Qliberator compiler, and QL Touch typist. Hardware wise there is a scart cable, a TF services I2C interface, a QIMI mouse interface and a QL power supply. It's a bit of a jumble sale and sometimes prices are mad. For example I have seen a QUANTA reprint of Jan Jones SuperBASIC book which latterly QUANTA had difficulty shifting at QL meetings go for £20-00. Often there are bargains to be had as well, it's a matter of seek and ye shall find.

On the subject of Jan Jones book why pay £20-00 or even a fiver if you don't want to. Instead pay a visit to the speccy.org/sinclairql/ and there it is along with a vast number of other manuals and books for download in a .pdf file format. No charge. Does it infringe copyright?

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Possibly although for copyright to exist the owners need to be willing to enforce it. Since the site has been there for sometime either the copyright owners do not know of its existence or do not care. I don't know which.

Care to download a cracked version of the classic Psion chess game. Its here at SinclairQL.es (http://www.speccy.org/sinclairql/) along with many other bits of software. The site is in Spanish so the help of Babelfish, a translation site, can be useful. I admit I have downloaded the Psion chess and tried it on QPC2. It does seem to work in demonstration mode at least. I own a copy of the original Psion chess so I don't think I am breaking copyright if only one is used at a time.

Or how about the worldofspectrum.org/documentation.htm site where the QL manual and technical manual are available for download. Some of these are available from Dilwyn Jones documentation site although I don't think Dilwyn hosts copyrighted material without permission just yet.

How about Omega Software Graphics. This site is bit of a blog. There is software to display hi colour graphics on a basic Sinclair QL. This is called Dithvide and is available for download.

Talking of blogs there is Andy Pennel's blog – he of the fame of "The Sinclair QDOS companion". There is Simon Goodwin's site. Then there is "Tezza's Classic Computers blog" with instructions on how to replace a keyboard membrane, "QL Hacker's Journal", and QL Heaven, plus many more.

There are tens of QL sites, perhaps hundreds. Each offering a different perspective. Many fixated on the past but many also focused on the present and future. As long as there is this plethora of interest in the QL associated software and developments on the Internet there is no reason why the QL community should not continue. If only QUANTA could harness some of this interest. To do this QUANTA's web presence needs to be active rather than passive, It needs to generate interest and catch the attention of transient, tangential and peripheral QL enthusiasts, both gaining and supplying what is needed to keep the Qliverse breathing into the future.

Dilwyn Jones site :   http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/index.html

Thierry Godefroy :   http://morloch.hd.free.fr/qdos/main.html#TOP

QUANTA Magazine

Bob Spelten : http://members.upc.nl/b.spelten/ql/index.html

George Gwilt : http://web.ukonline.co.uk/george.gwilt/

Marcel Kilgus : http://www.kilgus.net/index.html

Q40 : http://www.q40.de/

JMS Software : http://www.j-m-s.com/smsq/

RWAP software : http://www.rwapsoftware.co.uk/

Quo Vadis : http://www.ql-qvd.com/products.html

SMSQ/E sources : http://www.scp-paulet-lenerz.com/smsqe/

EBay's QL page : http://shop.ebay.co.uk/items/_W0QQ_ nkwZsinclairQ20qlQQ_armrsZ1QQ_fromZR40QQ_mdoZ

Documents : http://www.speccy.org/sinclairql/archivo/docs/docs.htm

Psion chess : http://www.speccy.org/sinclairql/

Translation : http://uk.babelfish.yahoo.com/

Dithvide : http://omega.webnode.com/products/sinclair-ql-dithvide-2/

Blogs : http://blogs.msdn.com/andypennell/archive/2009/01/12/ the-sinclair-ql-is-25-yrs-old-today.aspx

http://www.simon.mooli.org.uk/AF/article/

http://www.classic-computers.org.nz/blog/2008-10-18 -replacing-a-sinclair-ql-membrane-keyboard.htm

http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Pines/5865/qhj.html

http://qlheaven.blogspot.com/

USER GROUPS WORLDWIDE   Dilwyn Jones

Q UANTA currently lists contact details for several QL sub-groups in Britain.

We would like to include contact details for QL user groups in other countries too.

If you would like to have contact details for your group included in QUANTA magazine, please could you send the details to me as soon as possible, to the email address:

news@quanta.org.uk

What we are trying to do is to establish which countries still have user groups and how active they are. It doesn't matter if it is a formal user group or just an informal group of individuals meeting occasionally.

Alternatively, if you are a QL-using individual in a country where you are not aware of a user group, I would consider publishing a "contact request" if you would like to invite other QL users in your country to contact you.

WEST MIDLANDS QL USER GROUP

Mike Bedford White

T here has been a change of venue, brought about by the owners of the Queens Head pub changing it from a straight pub into an eatery. The new meeting place is called the Bull, the address is 1 Price Street, Birmingham, B4 6JU. Approx 7 minutes walk from Snow Hill main-line railway station and has ample street parking nearby. Meetings remain open to QUANTA members and non-members alike.

After your first meeting you're expected to pay £1 each time towards the organisation and monthly newsletter costs - except once a year when the group pays all those who attend a pound instead ;-)

We provide food twice a year for those who attend the AGM and the group's birthday party) and at meetings we discuss all sorts of things, QL-related and otherwise, usually from about 8:20pm onwards till 10:30 or later. The group owns QL hardware, a disk library and subscribes to relevant magazines. People can join the mailing list for £3.50 per year, even if they can't attend regularly.

Meetings : Meetings are usually on the first and third Monday of each month (but not on bank holidays unless the previous one was cancelled for that reason).

Contact : The contact number remains Mike Bedford White's, on 0121 605 4438, anytime after 11am.

MORE POINTS OF VIEW   Albert Newell

My Retro Approach

Following on from my brief thoughts on **Motivation** in the June/July Issue of QUANTA Magazine (Volume 26 Issue 3), it occurs to me that, whilst there is a quite brilliant developmental QL concept, there is an aspect of QL usage that might well be exploited.

What I envisage, is a ' vintage ' approach i.e. a sort of re-visit to some of the wonderful software that excited us so much when it first appeared and which, even then alerted us to the brilliance of the QL. We have the ' Channel 5 Top Gear ' enthusiasts but we also perhaps have, people such as myself who have an active nostalgia for things, such as 'cars of yesteryear' that; though they are in hindsight, recognised as having been more than adequate for the purposes for which they were designed, have fallen victim to the obsession for unremitting refinement and updating '.

It may be that, in the realms of computing, I am representing myself as something of a 'troglodyte' but, I love the QL for what it is, rather than as a springboard for parallel identification with systems that, in their sheer scope and brilliance are becoming, in my humble opinion, totally unrecognisable as practical, straightforward instruments for the extension of our ability to perform 'ordinary', perhaps even 'mundane' daily tasks for which, our mental capacity may be, at times - to say the least - less than adequate.

I know that I am probably addressing a dwindling group of actively interested, people but, if, like myself, they are people who have lived with the QL throughout its formative years they may well, again like myself, have a hankering to re-visit and almost certainly to learn more about the tools we already have to hand which justify our conviction as to the soundness of our original choice.

Regards albertN

Why QL?

I suppose having mooted the idea of an examination into why users of QL, do so, it behoves me to perhaps start the ball rolling' so to speak:

QUANTA Magazine

There must be a number of explanations for the attraction of the QL and the environment its use creates and engenders; some perhaps, more acceptably obvious than others. There may be a school of thought that adopts the premise that 'the banging of one's head against the proverbial brick wall' has the obvious attraction that, it's so nice when one stops. The point about the QL however, is that 'it does not stop', the question being, why?

In my own case, I feel that one of the dominant justifications is, a sort of a perverse 'defiance; of those who were so dismissive of Sir Clive's contribution, apropos in both concept and execution and of the aura of negativity with which it was surrounded at its inauguration, quite blatantly it has to be suggested, in the interests of pure commercialism. It is true that the QL has weaknesses and undesirable traits - what computer system hasn't? Indeed, the only reason I would accept, for employing an Emulator [of which, I have several; two of which are fully registered] is because of the fallibility of some of the QL hardware; notably the Monitor. It is not that I do not applaud and greatly respect the efforts of all those who have done and consistently continue to do, to extend the life and versatility of the QL, it's simply that I have an - old fashioned, if you like, loyalty to the original inception, i.e. the Black Box, which, incidentally, I use daily.

It has to be admitted that the 'setup' I work with consists of a hybrid combination of a PC desktop case with a QL PCB plus Super Gold card, plus 2x Cumana drives plus 2x Extended drives plus, of course, a Microvitec 'Cub' monitor. I use the Psion quartet; particularly Archive [with Ramdisc] and Abacus, for most of my ongoing requirements. I have several other machines, each configured with different OSs [in the interests of 'tinkering'] but, in respect of its intuitiveness and constructive versatility; within the broad parameters of QDOS/SMSQ/E etc. there is, in my opinion. no real contest between QL and 'others' - except, of course, Linux OS, of which there is a plethora of adaptations. Because of limitations in my visual acuity. in consequence of 'advanced' years, I am not comfortable with GUIs and in consequence, much prefer the predominantly textual character of such QL based programs as I use; in this context, of course, I am quite happy with the limited range of colours afforded by my 'Cub' monitor. It is my considered opinion, overall that, because of the cavalier treatment of the QL, from the outset, the computer world was deprived of the opportunity to exploit and profit from the true potential of what, at least, a steadfast number of adherents regard as a truly 'effective' instrument of modern manipulative technology.

albertN

A Brief Financial Report

The original parameters for the "QL is 25" weekend at Allesley was to organise an event similar to "QL is 21" - which was held in Portsmouth in 2005 - with a "similar budget" of £3,000. Subsequent discussion allowed for 4 year's inflation and increased this budget to £3,500

In an attempt to be fair to all our members, a venue in the Midlands was sought and found at Allesley on the outskirts of Coventry with good connections to Main Line Train Stations, the International Airport at Birmingham and the Motorway network.

Original estimates and quotations from the Allesley Hotel meant that we had to be very careful with our planning if we were to contain the costs within the budgeted figure. Indeed, one committee member even went as far as to get alternative prices from the Ibis Hotel in Portsmouth but although it appeared to indicate small savings financially, it did not have the benefits of the centrally based location of the midlands.

After continuing negotiations with the Allesley Hotel, reductions were offered in the accommodation charges down to the reduced charges available by booking on the Internet.

The question of free souvenirs for all members who attended was discussed and committee came to the conclusion that the tee-shirts and mobile phone chairs given at Portsmouth were an expensive "extra" which our budget could well do without.

In the end, we provided a two-day Workshop with demonstrations and speakers - to whom we offered our usual financial incentive against their accommodation and travel costs - a trader presence and a celebratory dinner, not to mention the attendance of the whole QUANTA committee to enable the Annual General Meeting to take place.

Part way through the planning of the event, it was suggested that we might publish a Silver Jubilee commemorative issue of QUANTA Magazine to be posted to ALL members. It was agreed that the costs for this may have to be additional to the "QL is 25" budget.

QUANTA Magazine

The final financial breakdown has not yet been completed since I am still waiting for some committee member's expense claims - which are normally submitted in November for inclusion in the annual accounts prior to audit. However, I have estimated these costs to be able to provide figures for this report.

For simplicity, I have shown the total costs incurred, the income from members and other visitors which results, following a simple subtraction, in the net cost to QUANTA for each section of the event.

Item	Overall Cost	From Members	Net Cost
Accommodation	£1,406.00	£1,024.00	£382.00
Workshop and AGM	£1,458.50	Nil	£1,458.50
Estimated costs not yet received	£250.00	Nil	£250.00
Meals	£410.50	£264.50	£146.00
"QL is 25" Dinner	£504.15	£290.00	£214.15
Staff Gratuity	£50.00	£50.00	Nil
TOTALS	£4079.15	£1628.50	£2,450.65
SJ Magazine			
Printing Costs	£417.90	Nil	£417.90
Postage Costs	£154.50	Nil	£154.50
TOTALS	£572.40	Nil	£572.40
Grand Totals	£4,651.55	£1,628.50	£3,023.05

It can clearly be seen from the above figures that not only did we provide a high quality event which was very enjoyable, we did so well within budget. (by over £1,000)

It should also be noted that taking the cost of the Silver Jubilee Magazine into the calculations the overall budget was still met with almost £500 to spare.

These figures are, of course, subject to audit.

LIBRARY CORNER   Dilwyn Jones

Change of Address

Please note that I now have a new home address, see inside the front cover. Requests for Library disks etc should be sent to me at the new address (22 Erw Las). The procedure for ordering disks or CDs is listed in the Members Guide folder issued to members.

Likewise, if you would like to submit a program to the library, please send it to me at the new address. You are welcome to send submissions on disk (no ED disks please, at least until I find and unpack my ED drives which seem to have become invisible following my house move!) or as a zipped file attached to an email.

Remember that you can contact the Librarian (me) using the email address

librarian@quanta.org.uk

Steve Poole Demo Disk

You will recall that I mentioned Steve Poole's demo disk in the last issue. I had problems with some of the programs on that disk meaning I couldn't fully evaluate it. Steve has now sent me another copy, but he is away from home for a while and I am in the process of moving house, so I'm afraid I didn't make as much progress on this as I would have liked, so I'll have to defer this until the next issue, as I haven't had time to go through it all and add it properly to the library yet. In the meantime if anyone would like to see a copy or to volunteer to take a look from the Quality Control viewpoint (knowing Steve I'm sure QC won't be an issue!) it might help to speed up inclusion in the Library.

Tony Hill's QL Manual

Isle of Wight member Tony Hill sent us a copy of the QL manual as a .PDF file earlier this year and wishes to make his version available to members only, so will be supplying it as a password protected PDF file. When the Content Management System is fully online for the web site in the not too distant future, large files like this PDF file can be made

available to download from there, either as password protected PDF files or password protected zipped files. This particular file is way too large for a floppy disk, so download from the Quanta web site or supply on CD will be the only options.

With the ever increasing usage of QL emulators, having an electronic copy available as a searchable PDF file should make it very easy to access the QL manual without having to have the rather large Sinclair paper manual kept near the computer!

There is another scanned PDF version of the QL manual available out there, although it hasn't really been proof read and corrected by hand after the scanning, whereas my preliminary look at this version from Tony Hill seems to indicate it has fewer uncorrected errors, although the protected version I saw was a little restricted in that it is a "locked up" PDF file which prevents you from saving text extracts from it, for example. Nonetheless, it is a promising work and once I'm safely in my new address I can resume discussions with Tony Hill about how we are going to make this available. It is not yet available to members while discussions are ongoing.

Please note that the QL manual will be subject to the usual copyright restrictions for Sinclair products in North America, namely that you will need to ask the copyright holders in those countries (Paul Holmgren and Frank Davis of Mechanical Affinity) for permission to download and distribute the QL manual in any form. At some point, we may ask Paul and Frank how best to proceed with this for North American users.

Hopefully, more on both of these submissions in forthcoming issues.

HELPLINE   Dilwyn Jones

Remember that you can send me your Helpline queries by email to helpline@quanta.org.uk , or by letter to the address inside the front cover. While we do our best to help, we obviously can't know everything about everything, so sometimes it takes a while to find someone who might have knowledge of what your query is about. Some queries may be published in the magazine and in the future listed on the QUANTA web site, although if you ask to keep the query private or anonymous, we will of course respect your wishes.

In the last issue, we looked at transferring files from a QL to emulators via serial cables. In this issue, I would like to discuss how to

transfer files to the QLay-based emulators, using both QL floppy disks and transferring files between the QLay environment and the underlying Windows hard disk.

Most of what is printed here applies to all Windows versions of QLay (including QLay 2) and QL2K, which is based on the QLay emulator. None of this applies to other Windows emulators such as QemuLator, uQLx for Windows, MESS, or QPC.

QLay, QLay2 and QL2K in particular are great free QL emulators for Windows, which are slightly hampered by their lack of ability to read QL floppy disks. They can save files into a WIN drive on the PC hard disk and to something resembling a MDV cartridge but stored on the PC hard disk. They do not have floppy disk drivers, so to transfer files in and out of QLay, QLay2 and QL2K we need to use some specially written programs to assist with the task, referred to as QLTools and QlayT programs which are DOS programs, not QDOS ones. These programs greatly enhance what we can achieve with these free emulators, but they are not the easiest of programs to get to grips with and I am often asked about QLay file transfer, so I thought an article on this subject would be helpful.

The QLay Environment

QLay, QLay2 and QL2K all store their QL files in a special folder on the Windows hard drive. The emulator uses a directory structure known as "qlay.dir" which, as the name implies, means "a QLay directory". This stores not only the file itself, but crucially a copy of the QL file header which includes such things as executable file headers, dataspace and so on. Without these file headers, programs you normally execute with commands like EX, EXEC, EW, or EXEC_W couldn't work - vital information the QL system needs to be able to start that program would be missing and the attempt to execute the program would be doomed to fail with a "bad parameter" error because the QL simply didn't know how to start the program in view of the missing information.

So what these emulators do is place a copy of these file headers in a special structure called qlay.dir inside the folder QLay uses to store our files. QLay's "hard disk drives" are called WIN drives, with full names of WIN1_ WIN2_ and so on up to WIN8_

So, if you have written a BASIC program on QLay or QL2K, you can save your program to one of these drives with a command such as SAVE

WIN1_MYPROGRAM_BAS pretty much like you'd save to FLP1_ or MDV1_ with a QL floppy disk drive or microdrive, for example.

Saving and loading files you created in QLay and QL2K is normally that easy, but the real fun and games comes when you want to copy files from a QL floppy disk to the emulator. You guessed it - QLay and QL2K can't read floppy disks!

So, what the authors of the emulators did was to make and supply some programs they referred to as "tools" to help you transfer files between QL floppy disks and the emulator (a DOS program called "qltoolsq"), and between the emulator's environment and the rest of the PC hard disk (a DOS program called "qlayt"). A copy of these two programs placed in QLay's WIN drive folders will help you transfer files to and from the emulator.

When you first set up QLay or QL2K you will have set up the emulator to have its various WIN files in separate Windows folders on your PC's hard drive. In the case of QLay2 for example, you may have stored the emulator itself in a folder called C:\QLAY\ and inside this folder you may have other folders called WIN1, WIN2, WIN3, WIN4 and so on. Calling them WIN just makes it a little easier to know what they are when you are browsing the Windows hard drive with Windows Explorer, or other Windows programs.

In the case of QL2K, the system is very similar with only a minor difference in that instead of calling the WIN folders WIN1, WIN2 etc., by default they have an underscore at the end of the name. QL2K normally installs in a folder called C:\Jadiam.org\QL2K\ (or may be in the "Program Files" folder on your hard disk). Wherever you store the emulator, inside the emulator's folder should be sub-folders called WIN1 or WIN1_ which hold the files your emulator saves to hard drive.

Using Windows Explorer, have a look inside these folders, but make sure you don't change anything yet. Locate the WIN folders and inside them you should see a file called qlay.dir and possibly a few small programs with names such as FT_BAS or QSBB_BAS. These are the programs the QLay emulator uses to help you set the timing values to make sure the emulator runs at the right speed. These may not be present in QL2K as its timing system is rather different. The main thing to look out for is the file called qlay.dir - if this is present, your emulator has set up its WIN drives.

By looking at the WIN folders like this you gain an idea of how QLay and QL2K store files on hard disk. They basically store the files as Windows

files in these folders, but in addition they put a small QL file header in the qlay.dir file, so to properly use WIN drives the emulator must be able to find both the file itself in the folder and an entry inside the qlay.dir file. For example, if you save a BASIC program called myprog_bas it will (a) save it as a Windows file called myprog_bas and (b) create an entry in the qlay.dir. So the qlay.dir is both a list of files the emulator can "see" and the file header too.

There is a small restriction on these qlay.dir directory files. They can only handle about 160 files and if you try adding more than this, some versions of the emulator will fall over and some very strange things start happening which could cause you to encounter problems accessing these files. But since you can have up to 8 WIN drives, this allows you to use up to 8*160 or about 1200 files in total, so it need not be seen as a very big restriction.

Another restriction in QLay and QL2K is that you cannot use "hard" directories from the emulator. There is no MAKE_DIR command to create them. So the fact that you can only store up to about 160 files on each drive is actually a blessing in disguise - more than this and you'd be swamped and find it impossible to organise and find files!

Before we can start copying files in and out of the emulator's WIN drives, we need to make sure we are using the correct "tools" programs. These are called qlayt.exe and qltools.exe. These are supplied with the emulator and the easiest way to use them is to simply copy them into the WIN folders using Windows or DOS. Since these are called from DOS or Windows, you do not need to worry about their details being seen in the emulator's qlay.dir system because they cannot be used from the emulator itself.

First, decide if you are running on a Windows NT type of filing system (Windows 2000, XP, or Vista, for example) or on an earlier FAT-based filing system (Windows 95, or Windows 98). See the emulator's documentation on choosing the right version for your particular emulator and filing system. Later versions of the QL2K emulator are only really intended for more recent versions of Windows and the "NT" filing system programs are the only ones which will work.

So, copy the qltools.exe (the emulator documentation refers to this as qltoolsq since it is a version of an older program of the same name, modified for use with QLay and QL2K) and qlayt.exe programs to the Windows folders holding the WIN drives. I found it easiest to put copies in

all the WIN folders, which is a bit wasteful of space but it makes it easier to use them while you are new to the system.

Qltools.exe is a program to handle QL-format floppy disks and transfer files between floppy disk and the emulators.

Qlayt.exe is a program to copy files between the QLay/QL2K filing system and the Windows hard disk drive.

QLTools

Assuming you now have your emulator set up ready, with all the WIN drives set up, make sure the emulator is NOT running, then we will try the qltools program to copy files from a QL floppy disk to the emulator.

Start a DOS box in Windows. For example, in Windows XP, go to the Start menu, All Programs, Accessories then Command Prompt. Alternatively, use the Run box to run something called "cmd" which is essentially the same thing. Now we need to change the directory so that we are in the emulator's WIN drive. Type in something like this into the DOS command prompt:

cd qlay\win1\

"cd" is a DOS command which stands for Change Directory. We use it to move to the folder where we placed the qltools.exe and qlayt.exe programs. You should now be able to use a DIR command from DOS to see the files present. The actual path name you type after the cd command will depend on where you have placed the emulator on your computer's hard drive.

Now we need to start the qltools program. Place a QL floppy disk with a few files on it in the PC's floppy disk drive. Like many DOS programs, the program is started by typing its filename and a few characters after it to indicate drive name and what to do.

A PC floppy disk drive is normally drive a: or drive b: so we can just type a space after qltools then the drive name and the colon symbol which the PC needs. First, we'll try getting a list of files from the QL floppy disk in drive A: with this command, typed into the DOS box's command line:

qltools a: -d

It is not usually case-sensitive. You can either type in qltools or qltools.exe, the PC should recognise either form. The a: is obviously the drive letter of the PC floppy drive, then the -d tells it that we want a 'directory' or a list of files. All being well, you should now see a list of files from the QL disk in the DOS box. The '-' symbol is called a "switch" followed by a letter which tells the program which action to take. -d lists files, lengths etc (standard long form) while another version, using -s lists the short version of the directory, just the filenames, which may be more convenient when you just want a list of files:

Qltools a: -s

Note that although the command itself is not case sensitive, some of the switch commands may be case sensitive. Using upper or lower case letters may produce different results.

The next thing we'll do is to try to copy the files from the QL disk direct to the emulator's WIN drive. To do this, we'll enter a slightly different form of the command:

qltools a: -q

The program will now start to copy files from the QL disk to the emulator's WIN drive and update the qlay.dir system with the details of the new files, so that you can go into the emulator and do a DIR of the relevant WIN drive, e.g. DIR WIN1_ and you should be able to see and load these files you've just copied. And that's all there is to it - just remember to close down the DOS box before you start the emulator. It's that simple!

Qltools has its own manuals, but if ever you want a quick reminder of the commands available, just start the qltools.exe file with no parameters, i.e. in DOS just type the command 'qltools' and it'll show a list of the available commands on the screen. The -q option is the only one specific to QLay and QL2K. All the other commands are general Windows and QL file transfer ones.

For example, you can use qltools to copy a file from the Windows hard disk to a QL floppy using the -w or -W options (the upper case version does not query whether to overwrite files on the disk or not). For example, you could copy a text file README.TXT from C:\ on the hard drive to a QL floppy disk using this command:

qltools a: -w c:\memo.txt

You may find that executable QL programs copied from the PC's hard disk to a QL floppy disk fail to execute properly, often giving a "bad parameter" error. As mentioned above, this is because they have lost their executable file headers and dataspace information. QLTools can fix this, using an option to set the dataspace to a known value. If you don't know the correct value to use, a bit of trial and error may be needed. Giving a program too much dataspace is a waste of memory, while too little may mean the program won't run properly. The -x filename dataspace_size can allow QLTools to fix a damaged file of this nature from what seems to be a data file back into an executable program:

Qltools a: -x filename 10240

The "filename" is the name of a file on the floppy disk. The number at the end is the number of bytes of dataspace (working memory) it is to be allowed when it starts. If you don't know the correct value, start with something like 10240 (10 kilobytes) and follow a bit of trial and error from there. This technique is very useful for fixing programs you've downloaded from the web and unzipped in Windows, which of course "breaks" QL executable programs. You should not need to do this with non-executables like BASIC programs, text files, databases, spreadsheets and other data files.

Remember that with QLTools, the "-q" option is the only one specific to QLay, QLay2, or QL2K. In all other respects, QLTools can be used as a general purpose Windows/QL disk file transfer program.

QLayT

We'll move on to Qlayt.exe now. This program is specific to QLay, QLay2 and QL2K and deals with copying files between the PC hard disk and the emulator environment. The emulator should not be running when you use this program, or confusion may occur.

QlayT helps you copy, delete and update files between the Windows hard disk and the QLay/QL2K part of the hard disk, basically anything where a file needs to have its entry created in qlay.dir or its entry updated. The options available are many and varied (some rather complex) but you'll find that you tend to use just a small number of the available options at first.

You can copy a file (or files) to the emulator's WIN folder using Windows Explorer or the DOS command line. What these won't do is update

qlay.dir so that the emulator knows what's happening. This is where QlayT comes in. QlayT has a manual called qlay.man which can be loaded into Windows text file editors such as Notepad to read.

It can work in two ways. You can type in commands to work on one file at a time as we did with QLTools, or you if you wish to copy several files as one batch, you can create a list of filenames in a text file and QlayT can work from that list, saving you a lot of repeated typing.

Like QLTools, we enter the name qlayt in a filename with a list of options after the filename. If the emulator has no qlay.dir as yet, we can create one by using a -c switch in the command line after the word qlayt. If it already exists, we can use the -a switch instead, which appends the file's information to an existing qlay.dir rather than creating a new qlay.dir

For this example, we are going to copy a text file called memo.txt from the PC to use in the emulator. Using Windows Explorer, we have copied memo.txt into the WIN folder for the emulator, but the emulator doesn't yet know it's there until we introduce the information about the new file to the qlay.dir system. We'll copy a single file and update the information with this DOS command:

Qlayt -i memo.txt

Once it's done that, you can check that it was successful by using the -l (and that's a lower case letter l, not the number one) option to list files that the emulator knows about:

qlayt -l

This will list the names of files stored in the qlay.dir. It may report that there are more files than listed. For example, if QlayT and QLTools are in the same folder, these won't be included in the qlay.dir list.

If the file being transferred is supposed to be an executable program, you can fix the file header to make it executable by using -d and a number for the size of the dataspace as above. Alternatively, if you are not sure what the dataspace value should be, you might like to try the -X option which looks inside the program for something known as an "XTcc field" which holds the correct value. Not all programs have this "XTcc field" but it can be worth trying. It is used with a -i command like the -d variant mentioned above. -X finds the details and updates the entry in qlay.dir. Alternatively, if you just want to see the dataspace value for reference, use a lower case -x instead.

Obviously, if you are going to add a few files, it may be quicker to work with a list of files than repeatedly entering separate commands for each file to be added to qlay.dir. We can create a suitable list in a text editor, or we can send the output of a DOS DIR command to a listing file, using the /b switch to list only filenames (no file lengths etc) and a > output qualifier to send the list to a file instead of to the screen as the DIR command in DOS normally does:

DIR /b >filelist.txt

This sends the list of filenames from the current Windows directory to a new DOS text file called filelist.txt, which we can use in a QlayT command using -c to create a new qlay.dir or use -a to append to an existing one (-a is the usual option once a qlay.dir has been created).

Entering this command into DOS will now make sure that qlay.dir "learns" of these new files introduced to its directory:

qlayt -a filelist.txt

What happens if qlay.dir already knows of a file like memo.txt, but you have played around with it in Windows and changed its size. QLay or QL2K may get a little confused at this point and may not be able to load it correctly, because it's a different size to the one they know about, so at best some data may go missing, at worst the file may be lost. Worry not, QlayT can "update" a file's details in qlay.dir to fix this. Make sure the emulator isn't running then run this dos command from the emulator's WIN directory to update the details:

Qlayt -u memo.txt

Suppose you want to remove the entry for a file from qlay.dir without deleting the file itself, e.g. you have finished with it in the emulator, now it needs to be processed in Windows. The -r switch in a qlayt command removes the entry from qlay.dir without deleting the file itself. The file stays in the WIN folder on the PC hard disk but the emulator no longer knows about it, so it is invisible to the emulator, but visible to Windows:

Qlayt -r memo.txt

Now the emulator has forgotten about memo.txt but you can still load it into a Windows program if you wish.

There are many options available with the QlayT program and this article lists the basics only, just enough to get you going until you have mastered the use of the program. The QLAY.MAN file is essential reading to find out all the available options.

FLP? What's That?

Here we have a bit of a catch-22 situation. If you transfer files from QL floppy disk to QLay or QL2K, the programs will most likely be designed to run from a disk drive such as FLP1_. But the emulators don't have any FLP drives and won't know what FLP1_ and FLP2_ and so on are. But the authors have thought of this and provided a WIN_USE command which lets you change the WIN device name to something like FLP so that the WIN drives can pretend to be floppy disks when required. WIN_USE "flp" changes the names of WIN1_, WIN2_ etc so that they now seem to be FLP1_, FLP2_ and so on, thus fooling the software.

MDV

QLay, QLay2 and QL2K also have drives called MDV. These are parts of the PC hard disk made to look like MDV files. So you can copy your old microdrive programs (well, unprotected ones anyway) to disk on your QL and then use QlayT to make them into little "MDV" drives on the PC hard disk. Copy the files onto the PC's hard disk and use the -C (note: capital C) option to copy the files to a qlay.mdv slot instead. The actual name of the mdv slot defaults to qlay.mdv but this can be changed with the -o option to another name.

Conclusion

The tools programs for these emulators are hard going at first because they work in a way which is a bit alien to us as QL users. Since these emulators can't handle QL floppy disks, we need to master these programs to allow us to copy files in and out of the emulator, so I hope this article encourages readers to explore the use of these programs to make it easier to use the free emulators brought to us by people like Jan Venema and Jimmy Montesinos.

CHAOS THEORY   Steve Poole

Consider the formula x=(r+1)*x - r*x*x where r is a constant and x is an iterative increasing value repeated a fixed number of times. This program does exactly this and compares the results to known exact values, (the absolute rule for verifying code). Most people think that computers calculate with great precision. This program is perfectly logical and has absolutely correct syntax. Yet it is evident that its results are totally inaccurate! So what is happening?

Large 'REAL' numbers are not calculated by computers as they cannot store infinite numbers of digits. So correct calculations are impossible in some cases on the QL as it truncates decimal numbers and then rounds them off. This operation falsifies arithmetic operations, as can be seen by comparing the printed output of the chaos program to the exact results.

Now for some theory :

Addition and multiplication are associative operations, because (A+B)+C = A+(B+C) and (A*B)c = A*(B*C). With a non-associative operation such as a subtraction, A-(B-C) <>   (A-B)-C. As subtracted results are truncated once they are smaller than zero, the multiplication in the program is no longer associative either, leading to inaccurate results, not only depending on bracket priority, but also on the truncation and rounding procedures used.

It should be said that wildly deviating results are typical of Chaotic formulae, where the results are highly dependant on initial values. Henri Poincarré discovered sensitivity to initial values in 1885, when studying triple orbiting bodies, such as the sun, the earth and the moon, (finding there was therefore no analytical solution). He noticed that an initial value for mass or velocity varying by as little as 1/1,000,000th could mean the planet could collide with its star or escape into space. Much later, Conrad Lorenz coined the famous phrase in 1960 that "the flapping of a butterfly's wings in the Carribean could cause a typhoon in Japan".

Many problems in physics have no analytical solutions and are therefore solved by successive approximations via iterative algorythms. (This is how Newton and Liebnitz discovered solutions to eliptic curves using Calculus). Such methods are subject to caution : Change your machine, program or compiler and you get totally different looped results. And the same thing is true for fractal routines which calculate on self-referential imaginary numbers...so do not be surprised if a fractal program written for the QL will not work on an Apple or vice-versa!

Therefore be very wary of computers, as one routine may in fact give thousands of millions of 'solutions', depending on the varying precision of the initial variables. This is because the simulated Universe is governed by the laws of Chaos, (yet where such simple concepts as PI have an infinite number of digits which real physical determination takes in its stride).

Computers can work in multi-precision, that is, they can calculate arithmetic as we humans do at school, extending precision to hundreds of digits, but iteration in such cases would take centuries to terminate. This is how the exact test results of the chaos code were determined. Indeed, Interplanetary satellites have to have their calculated trajectories readjusted regularly to fit observations...

Think of the example of Climate Change Modelling, vital for forecasting future weather conditions. These too are governed by sensibility to initial conditions. So how can we effectively make accurate simulations using computers which round off intermediate values? The answer is of course to test the algorythm on many machines, using a wide range of initial values and to statistically define the range of probable results. This is why the IPCC never give forecasts in terms of averages, but in terms of probable ranges!

So just run the Chaos_bas program and observe the effects. You will never think the same about computing again.

```
100 ::
110 REMark Chaos_bas, by S.Poole, v22nov08
120  REMark Quanta, beta-test by B.Coativy
130 :
140 CLEAR: RESTORE : OPEN#1,con_16
150  WINDOW 256,206,256,0: CLS
160 :
170 x=.5: r=3: n=7: DIM m(n)
180  FOR i=1 TO n: READ m(i)
190   DATA .385, .419, 4.63E-2, .32
200    DATA 6.22E-2, 4.9E-3, .553
210     AT 0,1: PRINT 'Exact :'
220      AT 0,12: PRINT 'QL :'
230 :
240 FOR f=1 TO n
250  FOR j=1 TO 10: x=(r+1)*x-r*x*x
260  AT f,1: PRINT m(f): AT f,12: PRINT x
270 END FOR f
280 ::
```

GAMES DISC REVIEW   Richard Southern

The QL Games CD from Dilwyn Jones is a QXL.win format file that can be played on Sinclair QL emulators. The games themselves are many and varied and apart from a few demo games, they are all Public Domain.

The initial readme.txt file is the most important as it describes what you need to do to get the games to work as they are all in their original form. The main challenge to getting these to work is overcoming the devices to boot such as when programs expect microdrives or particular memory fixes. Much of this depends on your own setup, although it would have been nice to have some of this done for you as otherwise it is just a collection of games that can be downloaded from Dilwyn's web site.

Not all the games worked first time on our test system, but that was because with so many to choose from, if it did not work first time we moved on. This does mean that we had hours of fun in getting the others to work.

On the whole the adventure games all worked first time and this is a good collection that has been both frustratingly puzzling and addictive.

Exploding Atom was a surprisingly addictive game once you understood the idea of how the game works to capture your opponents atoms.

QPuzzle was a simple squares game were you slide tiles around to complete the picture. Given the limited resolution and colours this was very good.

Some arcade games suffered by playing far too fast on an emulator such as Vicious Viper which was a snake clone. Fortunately the disk contained the SlowGold utility to slow down the emulator to a reasonable speed and allow the games to be playable.

A couple of the games gave incomplete procedures and DEFines within other clauses (Golf2 and Ghost) but this just gives you a chance to play and fix the SuperBASIC

A few of the games required the Pointer Environment, but if you do not have this, there is more than enough to keep you happy.

The downside to the CD, if any, is that as it is a CD and in a QXL.win format, it is aimed at the emulator market. For this market, it could have done with the device conversion being carried out already. Having said that, there is great fun in getting these games to work, so in some ways it is a better challenge.

Dilwyn is constantly adding programs to his site and the recent Phil Sproston games are not yet on the CD, so it is worth checking the site for updates. While you can download the games from Dilwyn's site, the convenience of having them already in a QXL.win format is a real time saver and for such a cheap price it is well worth buying.

In conclusion, the games are somewhat archaic but fantastic and the CD is good fun.

The QL Games CD from Dilwyn Jones or Quo Vadis Design £5

Richard Southern (Aged 13)

[Richard, son of John and Alison Southern is QUANTA's youngest contributor for many years and his submission is welcomed. Richard hopes to become QUANTA's youngest Associate member and I am certain that the current membership would welcome his membership.

Thanks for your submission Richard. - Ed]

A screenshot from one of Dilwyn's Games

SUBGROUP MEETINGS

THE WEST MIDLANDS QL USER GROUP

There has been a change of venue, brought about by the owners of the Queens Head pub changing it from a straight pub into an eatery. The new meeting place is called the Bull, the address is 1 Price Street, Birmingham, B4 6JU. Approx 7 minutes walk from Snow Hill main-line railway station and has ample street parking nearby. Meetings remain open to QUANTA members and non-members alike.

After your first meeting you're expected to pay £1 each time towards the organisation and monthly newsletter costs - except once a year when the group pays all those who attend a pound instead ;-)

We provide food twice a year for those who attend the AGM and the group's birthday party) and at meetings we discuss all sorts of things, QL-related and otherwise, usually from about 8:20pm onwards till 10:30 or later. The group owns QL hardware, a disk library and subscribes to relevant magazines. People can join the mailing list for £3.50 per year, even if they can't attend regularly.

Meetings : Meetings are usually on the first and third Monday of each month (but not on bank holidays unless the previous one was cancelled for that reason).

Contact : The contact number remains Mike Bedford White's, on 0121 605 4438, anytime after 11am.

Email: mikebwhite@blueyonder.co.uk

QUANTA DORSET SUBGROUP

Meetings are held, on the second Sunday of each month at the Merley Community Centre in Harrier Drive, Merley, just south of Wimborne Minster. Time: 2.00 pm. to 5.00 pm. All are welcome.

John Meadows Tel: 01202 576189, or John Mason, 01425 275894.

QUANTA Magazine

LONDON QL AND QUANTA GROUP

Meetings are held in the School Room, which is the basement of the Borough Welsh Congregational Chapel, 90, Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1. This is almost opposite the junction with Marshalsea Road, at the other end of which, 5 minutes walk away, is the Borough Underground Station. Free parking is easily available in Southwark Bridge Road for road users, Cyclists are welcome.

Members currently each pay a subscription of £30 per year towards the cost of the hire of the hall and a small additional charge is made for tea/coffee - biscuits are then provided free.

Please bring your QL equipment if possible, all types welcome, e.g., PC portable running emulators. The Group has some systems stored at the venue for its use. In addition, there are lots of donated second user equipment, books, magazines, etc, available for purchase.

Time: 2.00 pm. to 6.00 pm., on the second Sunday of the month.

No meetings are held in either December - winter break, or August summer break. Giving 10 meetings a year.

Malcolm Cadman: Tel: 020 8691 5780

email: QL@mcad.demon.co.uk

NEMQLUG - THE NORTH EAST MANCHESTER QL USER GROUP

Meetings are held at 181, Urmston Lane, Stretford, Manchester. M32 9EH (Near Junction 7 of M60 Motorway - Was Junction 7 M63 Motorway). Our informal meetings start at 7 p.m. and finish at 11 pm. All welcome.

Meets on the last Thursday of each month (except December).

John/Sarah Gilpin 0161-865 2872 (thegilpins@btopenworld.com)

SCOTTISH QL USERS GROUP

S QLUG meets at George Gwilt's home every second Sunday in the month. Please contact George Gwilt before coming to get the location.

Gdgggler@gmail.com.

SOLENT SUBGROUP

M eets at Botley Market Hall, all welcome. Park at the back and use side entrance.

1st Saturday of the month from 2.00 pm to 6.00 pm.

Graham Evans, Tel: 023 8040 3350.

SURREY QUANTA SUBGROUP (SQSG)

The group is currently trying other venues in the Leatherhead - Epsom area. If you plan to attend but do not get our emails, please phone or email Ken Bain for the latest location.

Meetings are 8.00 to 10.00 pm. On the last Wednesday of each month except December.

Ken Bain - 01932 - 347 432 (to midnight), kenb@bcs.org.uk

SUSSEX QL USER GROUP

C urrently without a meeting place, anyone interested should contact Keith Mitchell or Roy Wood.

Roy Wood, 01273 430501 or Keith Mitchell, 01903 742263.